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Statement submitted by Alliance Defense Fund, Mujer para la Mujer, Pro-Life Campaign, and Red Mujeres, Desarrollo, Justicia y Paz, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Alliance Defense Fund is a not-for-profit international legal alliance of over 2,300 lawyers dedicated to the protection of fundamental human rights.

Pro-Life Campaign, Mujer para la Mujer and Red Mujeres, Desarrollo, Justicia y Paz are non-governmental organizations from Ireland and Mexico.

On the occasion of the 2014 High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, we call on Member States to reaffirm our immutable human rights with a particular focus on authentic solutions to development that prioritize the needs of the person. Person-centred solutions focus on harnessing human ingenuity to drive development. It is imperative that the United Nations reaffirms the principles found in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which states that people are at the centre of sustainable development.

The needs of human beings are the priority. These needs should be addressed from the youngest stages of development. In doing so, we propose the United Nations recommits to the goals of health and education that inevitably lead to reducing poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality and combating diseases.

We find it fitting to address the demographic time bomb that we are currently facing. Policies that promote a smaller family size, which include access to abortion, have led to low birth rates. This has resulted in an increasing ageing population with fewer young people who are uniquely equipped to drive development.

We call upon Member States to focus on the first 1,000 days of life. The medical journal *The Lancet* published a series of articles indicating that maternal and child nutrition are quintessential to sustainable development. Both maternal malnutrition and obesity were studied in pregnant women and girls, resulting in child mortality and impaired physical and cognitive development, with lasting detrimental effects to the economic health of countries. Investing in education and health care for the first 1,000 days of life can save the lives of both mothers and their children, helping countries thrive.

We urge Member States to rely on evidence-based medical facts on maternal mortality. In its study on the global burden of disease, the World Health Organization concluded that the main causes of maternal deaths were: 23 per cent due to postpartum haemorrhage; 15 per cent to maternal hypertension; 9 per cent to sepsis; and the rest due to a mix of reasons, including obstructed labour, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular disease, malaria and anaemia. A 50-year study in Chile demonstrated that it was a woman's education level that led to a reduction in maternal mortality, not the legalization of abortion. In order to improve maternal health we call on Member States to implement five measures: (a) promote higher education levels for women; (b) ensure prenatal, antenatal and postnatal care; (c) ensure women in labour are cared for by skilled birth attendants; (d) ensure emergency obstetric care; and (e) provide access to water and sanitation.

Conclusion

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development brought the world together to ensure global answers to global problems. The role education and health play in ensuring goals on poverty eradication, respect for the environment and ensuring economic growth are measurable and evident. This is a critical opportunity for the United Nations to condemn coercive population targets and propose positive goals that embrace human dignity that drive development.